

Upside of the Woods by oofzu

Series: Stranger Feelings with It [1]

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Aged-Up Character(s), Drug Use, F/M, Gen, Help, Implied Sexual Content, M/M, Mike Hanlon Deserves Love, Underage Drinking, Will Byers Deserves Love, i am in love with reddie, will and mike and not together.yet.

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Will Byers

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Richie Tozier & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Hanlon

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Summary:

Mike puts his hand over the camera. “We can both be in the picture, so it’s not just you.” Will debates that idea. His mom would like to see all the pictures, and she would probably be happy to see him in at least one of them. He nods.

The Losers and The Party go camping. Will is overcoming the loss of his childhood while his closest friends are moving forward.

Upside of the Woods

Author's Note:

This is set in Stranger Things, Hawkins Indiana 1980/1990's. Richie and Michael Wheeler are twins. Mich is Michael Wheeler. Mike is Michael Hanlon. They are around 15-16, and the other actual teen characters are around 17-18. Let's say Stranger Things S1 & S2 kinda meshed and all happened in one-twoish years. I don't usually write about drug usage but here I am writing about it. I apologize in advance if I messed up anything. More personal notes at the end.

It all started when Karen asked about the Loser's camping trip at the dinner table. Eddie and Will stayed for dinner at the Wheeler's house. Richie's fork clanged against his plate as he dropped it to argue sarcastically. "You want me to take the nerds into the forest?"

Eddie's attention moved from his food to his fuming boyfriend. He moved his hand under the table to hold Richie's knee to comfort him. Michael's voice also cut in. "We could survive in the forest better than you!"

Eddie and Will stared at each other unsure what to do while the Wheeler's argued at the table. Will was ready to bolt out the door. His palms were sweating, and the spaghetti was no longer appetizing. He did not like arguments, especially not during dinner. It reminded him of his mom and Lonnie fighting. One time they were at the table and the man was upset about the bread being too dry, and he threw it at the wall. His parents argued while Jonathan pulled him out his seat and into his bedroom.

Will snapped back into reality when Karen's voice was loud and clear. "That is enough! I am buying both of you tents and you will both enjoy this time together. When will you all get another chance like this?"

Richie slammed his hands down on the table and made the dishware

clink. The floor made a noise as he scraped his chair away from the table and walked away. His footsteps were loud and heavy as he ran up the stairs. The table was quite aside from Ted cutting into his chicken. Eddie excused himself presumably to comfort his boyfriend upstairs.

Nancy broke the silence first, “how come you never let me go on any camping trips?” Karen stared at her in disbelief.

Those two started arguing. Will nudged Mich who was sitting on his left. “I’m gonna head home.” The curly haired boy nodded at him and gave him a strained smile. The bowl cut haired boy got up and stepped out of the house. He got on his bike and rode home.

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“It’s not fair Eds! Why can’t I ever do anything? Why do I always have to bring him along?” Richie’s mouth was pressed into Eddie’s stomach and his head laid on the small boy’s thighs. Callused fingers kneaded his black curls.

The brunette lovingly gazed down at the pouting giant in his lap and played with the lobe of his ear. “She just wants you to spend time together before we all move away and never come back.” He knew how much Richie wanted his individuality; the boy has always feared being just a part of a set, just a twin.

Over the years, the twins drifted apart. One hopped high fences and ran from cops, while the other one told fictional adventure stories. Until last year, they did actually have a monster fighting adventure. They fought against demon dogs from the upside-down world, met a girl with superpowers, and saved Will from the brink of death.

Richie sat up with a straight face and looked into his brown eyes. “We share this room, that’s enough time together.” His bed was against this walls and his brother’s bed was on the other side of the room. It was very evident as to whom owned each part of the room.

Eddie cradled Richie's face in his hands. "It might be fun, plus your mom will buy new tents."

The glasses donning boy wiggled his eyebrows. "We will have some fun in the tent." He leaned in and kissed the blushing boy.

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It's 3 days later, and Will is sitting on his porch with his backpack and sleeping bag. His mom is standing in the doorway sipping on coffee. They sorted out the tent situation. He would share Dustin's tent with said boy and Mike. They were basically the leftovers who wouldn't be sleeping with a significant other. Suzy couldn't make it to their last minute trip.

Earlier that week, during lunch, El imitated Hopper while recounting his reaction when she told him they were going camping for a night "NO BOYS, ONLY GIRLS!" The table erupted into laughter and formulated a plan to get El in Michael's tent. They would do this and that, and it wouldn't really matter because no adults would be around. It was going to be them and the Losers just camping out under the stars on some mountain.

During the past year of trying to get back to normal, Will found himself wandering closer to the Losers. Sure, they would greet each other in passing, but they didn't ever hang out outside of the Wheeler's house. His original party spent way more time with the girls than playing D&D. He and Dustin would hang out until it was Suzy time. Things just weren't the same anymore. They had to grow up. Will had to grow up.

Will was biking home one day, and a red truck stopped in the middle of the road. The window rolled down and revealed Beverly's red hair flowing wildly as a gust of wind passed. She asked if he wanted a ride home. He was kind of tired and didn't want to bike home that night. He nodded. Ben jumped out and helped him put the bike on the truck bed and they headed to their side of town. This started a new thing

where the four of them would ride to and from school or the Wheeler's house.

He would sometimes go with them to Bill's house for movie nights. A long time ago him, the Wheeler's, Bill, and Eddie were best friends. He thought it wouldn't hurt to rekindle those friendships. On his 3rd time they let him pick the movie. He chose the one Star Wars movie in the collection. Throughout the night Losers made their typical light jokes. He half expected them to make fun of him for liking nerdy geeky shit, but they didn't.

It's 9am, and a red truck comes up his driveway and then parks. All the occupants exit the vehicle and greet the Beyer's who are outside. Mike grabs the sleeping bag and adds it to the stuff in the bed under a net. They move things around and double check it's all secured then reenter the truck. Bev and Ben get in the back and sit next to a little stack of blankets. Will takes the passenger seat, and he looks out the window. His mom is waving at them. He waves back until he can't see her anymore.

Mike has a thermos sitting in the cup holder. Mike glances at him "you want some coffee?" Will shakes his head.

Bev leans into their space and holds out a tape. "I got something that will wake us up." She puts in the tape and a familiar song blasts through the car. All their heads nod along with the beat and the singing picks up in volume as they get further into the song. Will shouts "Should I stay or should I go!"

An hour and half later, they are in the mountains parked in the gravel. Will hops out of the truck and stretches his arms above his head. He is greeted by Bill. "H-hey Will." The auburn-haired boy smiles at him as they walk around to unload the items from the bed.

Bev is sitting on top of the picnic table with Richie, and they are smoking their signature cigarettes. Eddie yells at them from the pile of tent pieces. Stan is sitting on a block of wood inspecting a metal rod. "Help us you lazy dicks."

The black curly haired boy speaks with his arms as he addresses everyone. "Friends, you all know that my dick is not lazy."

Immediately there is a chorus of beep beep Richie. He gets up from the table, throws down the cancer stick, and smushes it under his shoe. He bounds over to the short boy and helps them with setting up the tents.

Will decides to help Ben unpack the ingredients from the coolers so they can start making the burgers for lunch. Bev joins them, she insists that she doesn't want to get accidentally stabbed during Richie's foreplay of a fight with Eddie.

When they get the flames for the grill going, the Party shows up. They all have on tired expressions. Lucas recounts having to sit through Hopper lecturing them that there better be no funny business. Then they had to listen to Billy's threats and get him off their tail. Apparently, the scary bulky teenager followed them through 2 red lights and only stopped when a fire hydrant exploded with water. No one implicated El with their words, but their smirks sure did.

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After lunch and cleaning up, they split up. Most of them went to go hiking up the mountain and some wanted to laze around in the hammocks. Stan and Bill went on their own to go observe the birds.

Will is trailing behind Ben, and he can hear the multitude of conversations. Lucas and Max behind him are talking about which arcade game is the most superior game. Richie and Eddie ahead laughing about something. Bev is humming a song he can't put his finger on. Mike is all the way in the front fighting off spider webs with a stick.

They are surrounded by trees and rustling noises. The bugs are gnawing at his skin, and it reminds him that he's alive with blood flowing through his veins. He can feel the heat of the sun despite them being in under the shade. He is keeping track of the orange strings tied around the trees. They have passed 41 of them, so they

can't be much further from the top.

He hears a delighted squeal from someone and a chorus of ah's. He also releases a sound when he sees what they see. They are surrounded by a plethora of tall wild purple flowers and short yellow flowers. He can see other green mountain tops, and the clouds are so close he could touch them. They haphazardly drop their bags and water bottles onto the ground.

He grabs the camera hanging around his neck and snaps pictures. He gets a picture of Ben handing a flower to Bev. He snaps Richie making a flower crown while Eddie kneels next to him. He takes a picture of Lucas and Maxine laying in the grass and flowers. They are smiling with their eyes closed and their fingers are laced together. He thinks its sweet.

Then uses the camera to help him find Mike. He's standing at the edge and is searching for something in the distance with his eyes. The sun hits him just right and his skin is glowing. Will keeps looking through the lens as his subject turns to face him. Mike puts on one of his infectious smiles and Will instinctively presses the shutter button. He lowers the camera as the other boy walks up to him. "One more, you need a picture of you."

Will's eyes shift down to the object in his hands. He speaks lowly. "I don't really like to have my picture taken." He doesn't like to be the center of attention. He prefers to be in the background, behind the camera. He always feels weird when Jonathan takes his pictures. He especially hates taking school photos. Everyone stares while the photographer directs him to smile bigger.

Mike puts his hand over the camera. "We can both be in the picture, so it's not just you." Will debates that idea. His mom would like to see all the pictures, and she would probably be happy to see him in at least one of them. He nods.

The hand leaves the camera and moves to Will's shoulder. He wraps an arm around Mike's back. Their cheeks are pushed together, his entire left side meets every part of Mike's right side, and he his hand holding the camera is being lifted with a much larger hand. The camera lens is in their faces. He puts on his best smile and can feel

the other cheek move. He doesn't have to look to know that Mike has on a big toothy smile. He watches the finger press down on the red button.

They are much too sweaty and sticky to be standing this close to each other. He feels warm inside, it's because they are finally being embraced by the sun. There is also heat radiating off the more muscular boy. There are no trees around up here at the top of the mountain to provide them any shade.

His companion unsticks from him when they hear "Eds! My cute prince!" They both turn around to see what is unfolding behind them. Richie is on one knee in front of Eddie, with one hand reaching out. The shorter boy is standing up and his cheeks are red. Three flower crowns are stacked on top of his head. There is no real malice behind his voice and a grin is threatening to spill from his straight face. He reaches for the outstretched hand. "Richie, you're an idiot."

The boy on the ground gets up and embraces his boyfriend. He puts on a British accent. "You have accepted my undying love for you!" They laugh boisterously as Richie peppers his entire face with kisses. Eddie grabs him and kisses him on the lips. The crowns fall one by one as he tilts his head up to reach the taller boy.

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When they make it back to the camping area, they find Dustin in a hammock talking into his radio. Suzy and him probably worked all night on how to reach each other's radio frequencies. The other four were sitting on the logs encircling where there will be a campfire. El and Michael were whispering amongst themselves. Stan was pointing at things in the notepad in Bill's lap. Eddie knew that was the bird sketching notebook.

He goes to his tent to grab more bug spray. He saw the bug bites on Will's legs and arms. He's in there searching through their stuff. He can't find the other can he brought. He huffs in frustration as he lets

go of his bag. He hears someone unzip the tint and comes in. “What’s wrong?”

He turns to Richie, “I can’t find the bug spray!” His boyfriend fishes it out of his pocket and throws it to him. Eddie questioningly looks at him.

“I brought it along in case you used up the entire can. I thought you would spray every bug that buzzed by your ear.” He sits next to him so they’re eye level.

The brunette flicks his nose. “Thank you.” He moves to get up but is held in place by long arms. He moves his hands to brush the grass out of the black hair. Earlier, when they were in the flower field Richie knocked them down and they rolled around in grass. He leaves in the flowers because they are cute in Richie’s hair.

He lets them stay like that for a few moments but then remembers why he came into the tent in the first place. He pulls on Richie to get up, and he does after Eddie promises to make him smores.

They come out of the tent and Richie slings an arm around Eddie’s shoulders. They find Will had replaced El’s spot on the log. The blonde is recounting the amazing view at the top of the mountain. He says that Jonathan promised to help him develop the photos. Eddie hands the can over and the boy gives him a confused face. Richie gestures at Will’s arms and puts on his best Dracula voice “It’s to keep those bugs from sucking all your blood.”

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They all sit on logs around the campfire. Bev presents a bottle of clear liquor out of thin air. The glasses clad boy stands up and yells “Time to party ladies!” Eddie put his hands on his ears to prevent himself from becoming deaf. On his right he sees Bill rolling a blunt on the notebook from earlier. He looks around the circle. The Party has varying expression. Dustin and Max are excited, El and Lucas

seem curious, Mich is skeptical, and Will seems apprehensive.

During their hangouts at Bill's, Will never accepts any of the drugs and they never pressure him into it. Did he feel like he had to do it now that his close friends were around or did he feel more comfortable with doing it now?

A bunch of them took shots. Then Bev poured soda and the liquor in their cups. He downed his cup a few times and had smoke in his lungs. He doesn't have asthma; he knows he will be okay. He's tucked under Richie's arm and his head is resting against his thundering chest. The laughter is music to his ears. Behind him he overhears Mike saying that it was okay to not drink or do anything. That was nice of him, he wonders who his friend is taking care of. A song starts playing from a stereo, and he can't figure out who turned it on. He doesn't see anyone near it, El must have done it.

At some point they started telling horror stories, because right now Dustin is in the middle of telling a story about a killer clown who lures children into sewers and feeds on fear. The scariest part of the story is how disgusting it is. The sewers? A nasty abandoned house? Gross. Stan was picking the story apart; it didn't make any logical sense.

Eddie pulls back his stick because his marshmallow was nicely toasted. He put it between the graham cracker and piece of chocolate. He holds right in front of Richie. The boy leans forward and bites a corner and chews obnoxiously wide to show the sticky white substance hanging onto his teeth. It is gross but oddly charming. There is some melted chocolate on the corner of his lip, and Eddie leans forward to lick it clean.

Richie is shocked at first but quickly smirks "how bold of you." Eddie looks around as he felt eyes on him; all their friends were staring at them. He didn't feel ashamed. He feels like riding on the wave of confidence, so leans back in. Their mouths meld with vigor and he lightly tugs on the curls in his fingers. He hears a moan come from the back of Richie's throat.

Next thing he knows he's being ripped away, and Stan is complaining. "Enough with the PDA! Eddie you're a stupid love

drunk monster! Go to your tent!” Bill’s hands were on their faces keeping them away from each other.

Richie grabs Eddie and leads them to their tent “Come at your own risk!” They watch the zipper make a full 180 to indicate their door flap has been zipped closed.

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Will sat next to an emotional Bill. He expressed how happy he was that Will started hanging out with him again. He talked about that time when Bowers stole Bill’s dump truck, and Will gave his to him. That’s how he knew they were going to be friends forever. Then he started talking about sand and how they are tiny specs of the universe, but they are really important. Then he started getting hot and took off his shirt.

Ben came over and spoke in his usual calm tone. “Bill, why don’t you lay in your sleeping bag? It is probably colder than out staying out here.” The auburn-haired boy agrees and lets himself be guided to his tent where Stan was already sleeping.

The only ones still out were Bev, Ben, and Mike. The Party got pretty wasted early on as they weren’t as versed in consuming those things. Lucas blew chunks and they decided it was time to let the party die down. Mich was paranoid most of the night; he said they would come and take El away. They got him to chill out by talking about D&D. Him and Dustin verbally planned a campaign for almost an hour. Max and El spent most of the night giggling with Bev about the various things. Probably about the boys.

All night, Will watched his friends let loose and do things they would probably regret in the morning. He wanted to do it too, but he was afraid. He doesn’t want to lose control of his mind and body. He saw what happened to his friends. Stan would never willingly touch a dirty shoe, Dustin would never openly sing that cheesy love song, and Michael would never bring up the upside-down without Will

prompting discussion.

He stares into the night sky. Bev and Ben said goodnight about 10 minutes ago. He was next to Mike. Maybe it was the drowsiness in him that made him ask his question. His voice is soft and tight “Do you think I’m lame for not doing any of it?”

He knows Mike is too nice to think that, but he wanted to hear the answer anyway. “Of course not. Do things at your own pace. There is no rush.”

The words ring in his ears, and he looks at Mike. “No rush?” The boy affirms what he said and elaborates. There is no reason for Will to hurry up and be an adult. Mike on the other hand had to grow up. He had to take care of the farm with his grandfather. He didn’t get to experience a normal childhood, and he thinks Will should embrace it. He should hold onto his childhood as long as he can.

Will thinks it’s okay. He can finally say it out loud. It will be okay. He’s tired, maybe it’s a dream. Mike may be not sober enough to remember this later. “I don’t ever want to feel like I’m not myself again.”

Mike searches for the meaning behind the words in Will’s eyes. They were penetrating at first, it was like he was searching for Will’s deepest secrets, but then soften. It seems like he has an understanding because he nods. He takes a moment before he speaks. “If you feel like everything is crumbling around you, tell me. I’ll help ground you.”

It’s in that moment, Will hears what he thinks he’s been waiting for. Maybe it was the tone or maybe it was the look in his eyes. It was different from when his mom or when the Party said things like that. It was as if Mike understood what it was like to lose a part of himself. Did it also take Mike a long time to piece himself back together? Was he still putting the pieces back together?

He feels the warmth of the fire. He can smell the burnt wood and liquor. The crickets are chirping, the owls are hooting, and the leaves rustling. He sees the stars twinkling and the orange glare dancing along Mike’s frame. He’s able to catch his expression. His eyes are gentle, and a comforting smile dawns his face. Will’s heart beats hard

like when he has bad memories. Maybe he can replace those with good ones. He is reminded that he is alive and safe.

#### **Author's Note:**

First, no I did not proof read this. If you find mistakes pls point them out to me. Will I go back and fix it? Probably not, but then I'll know in my subconscious I know I make this and that mistakes and hopefully I will subconsciously try to not make the same mistakes.

I was on Pinterest and kept seeing this comic, and I got super intrigued. It was called Loose Ends and it was about Reddie. This was really strange for me, but there I was paying Patreon to read the comic. It is so amazing, so incredible, and so charming. I needed more content, so I started reading fanfics and stumbled into IT crossovers with Stranger Things. Now I am binge watching Stranger Things again and writing about Mike Hanlon falling in love with Will Beyers. I am really in love with Reddie though.

Also, I think reading those fics kinda influenced the music I started listening to. Here is a cool song. Sarah and the Sundays – The Woods.

I still can't formulate well written cohesive well flowing stories. I just have a lot of ideas and emotions. I have a few more things I want to write that will be a part of this series, and honestly they will probably be not as good as this one. Thanks for reading my blurb of thoughts and imagination.